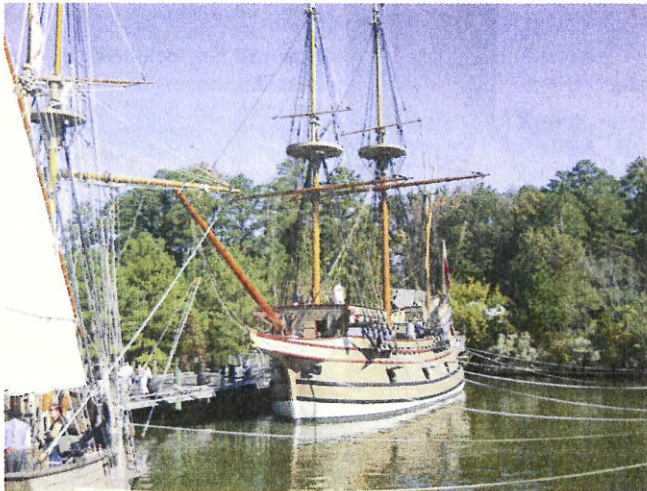


Where America Began Find history for all ages at Jamestown



After 10,000 years of inhabitation solely by the Powhatan Indians, "Jamestowne" became the first permanent English settlement in the New World in 1607. Originally a business venture with its own joint stock, this fledgling community endured horrendous difficulties fraught with drought, disease, starvation, and Indian attacks. After managing to survive until 1699, a fire destroyed Jamestown, and the capital of the Virginia colony moved to Williamsburg.

Having grown up near Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts where there is nothing to see at the site but the "big rock," I was amazed by how much there is to see and do in Jamestown. In fact, one could spend days in Jamestown and not absorb it all.

There are two separate sites, Historic Jamestowne and the Jamestown Settlement, both of which are spectacular and entirely unique. Each location has so much to offer indoors and outdoors. Each also has its own admission fee, so it's wise to choose one to visit and come another day to experience the other.

Run by the National Park Service, Historic Jamestowne (www.historic-jamestowne.org) contains the actual

remains of the original settlement. In addition, there are two distinct museums, the first of which is at the initial building, where you can view a well-done panoramic introductory movie. If you are with small children, it's best to head outside after the movie. Although fascinating, this museum is adult-oriented. The kids will love to run along boardwalk leading out to the original site.

Set with a glorious view of the James River, the waterfront site is breathtaking, explaining why the colonists chose this exact location. And there you will see a majestic obelisk, a memorial church, and a commanding statue of Captain John Smith, Virginia's first governor.

In addition, there is the ongoing excavation and the second museum, the Archaearium, containing the site's archaeological finds. The building itself is a marvel, literally located on the remains of Virginia's original statehouse, which you can see through the glass floor in the entryway. This small but fascinating museum contains nearly 1 million artifacts discovered on site, such as English armor and guns, iron tools, skeletal remains, pottery pieces, as well as rings, pipes, buttons and belts.

Admission to Historic Jamestowne is \$10 for an entire week, including reciprocal visits to Yorktown Battlefield. Children 15 and younger are free. For a casual meal appealing to both kids and adults, try the picturesque Dale House Café on the site next to the Archaearium.

Just down the street, the Jamestown Settlement (www.historyisfun.org) is a grand museum. It feels like it was built for a queen because it was – in honor of Queen Elizabeth II's 2007 visit to commemorate Jamestown's 400th anniversary. The introductory 24-minute movie is informative and entertaining – even for our five-year-old. The top-notch exhibits span 30,000 feet and are highly interactive, beginning in 1607 and progressing until 1699.

Don't use up all of your energy indoors, though, because the outdoor "living history" area is equally spectacular and even more kid-friendly. Experience daily life as it was in "James Fort" because the Settlement has duplicated it with every known detail intact, including role-playing actors. Budding historians can explore the church, guardhouse, storehouse, and governor's house. Next climb aboard the three wonderfully recreated vessels, the Susan Constant, Godspeed, and Discovery that once brought the colonists to these shores. Also explore the fascinating re-created Powhatan Indian Village, its tents centered on open campfires and its walls covered with animal pelts for warmth.

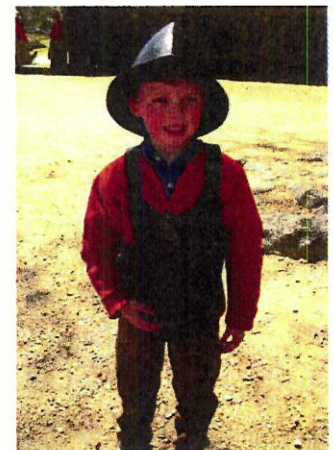
There are various admission types for the Settlement: a day pass, an annual pass, as well as options to include Yorktown Victory Center. Keep in mind it is way too much to do the Settlement and YVC in one day. Children under 6 are free. Check to see if there are promotions for Richmond residents. Also, the Settlement offers a spacious and pleasant café set up cafeteria style with lots of options.

En route to Jamestown on Jamestown Road, the Old Chickahominy

House serves an authentic plantation breakfast and luncheon meals in a charming 18th century dining room. Along with their delectable Southern food, they also have a spacious antique gift shop filled with furniture, lamps, and other home décor items, as well as jewelry, jackets and seasonal gifts.

Upon departure from Jamestown, there are a couple different driving routes in addition to the standard Interstate 64. This one will get some smiles: Take the nearby Jamestown-Scotland Ferry across the river to Surry. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Admittance is free, car included. Upon arrival, you can pick up Route 10 toward southern Richmond at the first intersection, which then connects with interstates 295 and 95. Another option is to pick up Route 5 coming out of Jamestown and follow that home. After a remarkably bucolic and tranquil drive along the plantations without a stoplight to be seen, there is a gorgeous view of the Richmond skyline as the road winds into Church Hill. **RPM**

Libby Carty McNamee is a writer and mother who can't wait to visit the Archaearium again and take the ferry across the James with her son.



Photos by Libby Carty McNamee